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2020

### Review of Friendship in the Hebrew Bible by Saul M. Olyan

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*Friendship in the Hebrew Bible*. By SAUL M. OLYAN. The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library. New Haven: YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017. Pp. xiii + 191. \$50.

Saul Olyan's monograph argues that our Western tradition of friendship should not be thought to commence with Plato and Aristotle. Instead, he exposes a rich set of reflections throughout the Hebrew Bible's many varied texts, which can provide clues for how people conceived of friendship well before the *Lysis* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Why this should be of more than antiquarian interest for the modern friend is not always made clear in the book. But for friendship theorists and scholars, the book delivers the thrill of genuine discovery. Although we all know about Ruth and Naomi's apparent friendship from *The Book of Ruth* and David and Jonathan's close relationship from *Samuel*, it turns out there is a whole lot more to learn about friendship and non-familial interpersonal intimacy in the compendium of sources that make up the Hebrew Bible, right in plain sight.

Still, methodological questions nagged me right from the beginning. Although it is a worthy task to be able to develop a sketch of friendship from within a singular work in a dominant and important tradition, it is hard to weave coherence from a set of edited narrative works, prophetic works, and wisdom literature, components of which were likely drafted one thousand years apart by many different authors. To pick a random example, the book looks at usages from *Numbers*, *Jeremiah*, and *Proverbs* essentially in the same breath (p. 18), without any real sense that there may be a hierarchy of sources for those who view the compendium as authoritative and treat it as a guide for living.

Indeed, if someone were to write a book several thousand years from now in a post-Apocalyptic society trying to unpack "our" concept of friendship from a surviving copy of the latest *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, would it make sense to run a concordance on texts as diverse as *Beowulf* (the root word "friend" appears thirty-six times) and Zadie Smith's "The Waiter's Wife" ("friend" appears nine times)? I am not certain this would be a defensible methodology without substantial argument and framing. And Olyan does not really offer a sustained defense of his method, which treats all these books as one text.

It certainly makes sense that Olyan does not want to lead with interpretive readings of the textured and developed narratives of friendship from *The Book of Ruth* and *Samuel* because these narratives are well known and often told. Yet, Olyan has some new insights about those old stories—appreciating, for example, Ruth's too-simple devotion and Naomi's much-more-human imperfection at friendship—and he can tell these relatable stories well. And the average reader might have preferred that these materials not be delayed until the third substantive chapter (of four chapters), which also develops additional narratives that are much less familiar: one about Job's friends who comfort him in *The Book of Job*; one about Jephthah's daughter from *Judges* and the friends who accompany her as she mourns her virginity and her failure to give her father an heir; and one about Jonadab in the second book of *Samuel*, who gets his friend Amnon into some serious trouble—and ultimately abandons him.

Olyan concludes this chapter by noting: "Prose representations of friendship frequently offer the reader named characters who are more fully realized than the anonymous friends mentioned in wisdom texts such as *Proverbs* and the Job dialogues, prophetic texts, or the psalms of individual complaint,

friends who are often little more than one-dimensional types” (p. 83). Exactly the reason a reader might engage in “individual complaint” that so much of the book tries to string together a story about friendship from excerpts with various Hebrew roots (*rea* [‘friend/neighbor/co-religionist’]), *dbq* [‘clinging’], *ahab* [‘love’], *bth* [‘trust’], *haber* [‘friend/companion’], *nefesh* [‘self’]) that appear with very little context from a compendium of books drafted over millennia with uncertain meanings. It probably would have been better to collate some of the core passages that recur throughout the book, and furnish for the reader better context and more exegetical approaches to the literary analysis, with more attention to hierarchy among the sources.

There is also the matter that we are told that some usages get filtered out as irrelevant to the dataset (a very useful and impressively thorough “Index of Passages” appears at the end of the book). But very little explanation is offered for what principle could possibly be used for excluding textual data, given that it is hard to have any priors about the social meaning of friendship for biblical authors nor much confidence that the words are being used consistently across time. It is the purpose of the study, after all, to bear witness to what the Hebrew Bible is telling us, not to impose a presentist bias about, say, the separate spheres of sex and friendship, or business and friendship. The *dbq* root, for example, is used in connection with Adam and Eve’s sexual union (Genesis 2:24) and Shechem’s lust for Dinah (Genesis 34:3), so its centrality to claims about biblical sex-free “friendship” requires more rigor and elaboration.

And then, finally, one more methodological issue: Just what the text is supposed to be data *for* is not fully clear. Sometimes it feels like a book about a book: textual analysis and literary criticism. At other times, however, it feels like a book about a time period, about real people and their real friendships—about how they lived and felt. When Olyan worries about veering into “speculation” (pp. 36–37) about “biblical society” (p. 115), one gets the sense that he is trying to tell us something about the real world during biblical times. But so much of the concordance-style method feels more rooted in and more appropriate to a text than to real people. And it is not clear why the historian would not be doing a lot more with friendship in *Gilgamesh*, which barely appears in the book. That leaves me thinking that the book could be better framed as a Talmudic effort for how Jews should be friends, in light of biblical sources.

There are, nevertheless, some pretty interesting findings to come out of this study. Along with relatively commonplace observations that friends are generally loyal to one other, value reciprocity, take delight in one another, should not be estranged or distant from one another, and experience emotional attachment to one another (pp. 90–91), Olyan develops from the text of the Hebrew Bible some distinctive characteristics of friendship. For example, although biblical sources expect people to formally mourn only a particular circle of intimate family member deaths and ultimately be buried near them, friends have a unique role in comforting mourners (pp. 22, 34). Family members also generally have the resources for reconciliation after substantial conflict, but Olyan teaches that there are no good examples of meaningful reconciliation after a friendship ruptures (pp. 49–50).

He also teaches that although family and friends seem like separate spheres for biblical authors (there is the awkwardness that *Samuel* describes the connection of souls between David and Jonathan in the very same terms used of Jacob and Joseph’s souls by the author of *Genesis*—and these are the only appearances of this kind of intimate connection [*kesher*] in the whole Hebrew Bible [p. 71]), friends *are* capable of entering formal strategic treaties and alliances (*brit*) without derogating from real friendship (p. 76). This is a mixing of types that looks a little different from more modern Aristotelian inheritances, in which friendship types are less hybridized.

Moreover, female friendship is celebrated (p. 85), which we do not always hear about in the Western literature of friendship (though there is some evidence of less formality in friendship among women [p. 112]). And although people can be real friends when they have different social statuses, there is almost always equity in behavioral expectations among friends in the Hebrew Bible (pp. 73–74, 86, 113).

There are also insights here about friendship’s relationship to society more generally. Although shame and denunciation routinely befall failing friends (pp. 52–53), having loyal friends is rarely part of boilerplate blessings in the Hebrew Bible—and losing them is rarely part of boilerplate curses therein (p. 56). Still, social decline more generally is often characterized by the loss of bonds of inti-

macy, which tend to include friendship (p. 55). This interesting finding may show friendship in the Hebrew Bible to be outside law and religion, a deep way to think about friendship's place in the social order even in biblical times.

The book concludes with a short chapter on the *Book of Ben Sira*, a book conventionally considered part of the Apocrypha rather than the Hebrew Bible proper. For a book ostensibly about friendship in the Hebrew Bible to devote one of four chapters to a volume outside the canon might seem an odd choice. But Olyan uses the study to contrast the biblical picture of friendship with more recent writings that likely had Hellenistic influences. What we learn is that as we get closer to Hellenistic culture, friends are more likely to fight for their counterparts (pp. 93–94), are more likely to be tested (p. 98), are more likely to be small in number to let friendship thrive (pp. 99–100), and are more likely to be prized for frankness rather than flattery (p. 98). The “diachronic dimension” (p. 114) Olyan offers is, ultimately, productive in helping us get clearer about the Western idea of friendship, which no one will any longer think starts with the Greeks after this book.

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*The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts.* By LOREN T. STUCKENBRUCK. Grand Rapids, MI: WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO., 2017. Pp. xx + 427. \$50 (paper).

This volume brings together fourteen articles by Loren Stuckenbruck, thirteen published over the last two decades and previously scattered in other volumes of collected papers and one new article. This paperback edition (a reprint of a 2014 hard copy) updates Stuckenbruck's work and makes it more affordable to a wider audience. As the title suggests, all of these articles draw on Stuckenbruck's expertise in the Enochic corpus, serving as an excellent reference volume for scholars working on almost any topic in the study of ancient Judaism and early Christianity.

Articles in this volume answer such questions as: What is the origin of evil according to apocalyptic Jewish sources (ch. 1)? Why were ancient learned circles of Jews interested in lingering on stories about the giants, the offspring of the fallen angels, and what might this interest tell us about Jewish reception of Near Eastern myths (ch. 2)? What kinds of stories were ancient Jews circulating about biblical heroes like Noah or Daniel (chs. 3 and 5)? How did ancient Jews understand demonic beings, their origins, names, and level of threat to humankind (ch. 4)? How do the different recensions of the Book of Tobit show us a debate about medicine and magic (*pharmaka*) among Jews in antiquity (ch. 6)? Did Philo know apocalyptic texts like the Enochic corpus or other Dead Sea texts (ch. 7)?

Chapter 8 is the only previously unpublished piece and uncovers why tradents came to insist on Jesus's origin “from the Holy Spirit,” a most unusual description as Stuckenbruck points out. Chapter 9, discussed in greater detail below, investigates how ancient Jews or followers of Jesus understood demonic possession and exorcisms. Chapter 10 demonstrates how texts preserved in Qumran contextualize the way evil is conceptualized and combatted in the Gospel of John. Chapter 11 explores where the author of The Acts of the Apostles might have gotten “the idea of cleansing the Gentiles' hearts” and how the gentiles are treated in biblical and ancient Jewish texts more generally (p. 217; ch. 11). Chapter 12 inquires as to what extent the apocalyptic ideas of Paul were paradigm-shifting in his own time. Chapter 13 examines Paul's puzzling insistence that women should cover their hair “because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10). Finally, the last chapter reevaluates how 1 Enoch influenced or shaped traditions in the Book of Revelation. This list hopefully gives a sense of the richness of the studies available in this volume.

Stuckenbruck gets to the bottom of every one of these questions, methodically mapping out and analyzing all relevant primary sources in each article. His scrupulous, collaborative, and generous scholarly spirit is evident in the way he carefully considers others' contributions and lists others'